

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-16 are all the claims pending in the application. By this Amendment, Applicants are adding new claims 17 and 18.

Applicants thank the Examiner for withdrawing the previous rejections in view of the submitted arguments.

**Due Date for Filing a Response**

The original due date, February 6, 2010, was a Saturday. Additionally, due to severe weather conditions, the Federal Government (including the United States Patent and Trademark Office) remained closed February 8-11, 2010, with each of these days being declared as a “Federal holiday within the District of Columbia” under 35 U.S.C. § 21(b) and 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.6, 1.7, 1.9, 2.2(d), 2.195 and 2.196. Accordingly, this amendment is being timely filed and no petition for extension of time is necessary.

**Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103**

Claims 1-5, 8-11, 15 and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U. S. Patent No. 6,926,178 to Anderson in view of U. S. Patent No. 5,565,275 to Schmidt et al.

Applicants submit that one of ordinary skill in the art, seeking to improve a classic seal without a rigid insert would not consider Anderson or Schmidt to produce the features recited in independent claims 1 or 15.

Anderson discloses a valve comprising valve stem 108 and a sealing ring 112 surrounding the valve stem to form a sealing contact. (See Anderson, col. 5, lines 57-60; FIG. 2a.) The sealing ring 112 is made of a bi-material structure comprising a rigid core 130 surrounded by a flexible material 140. (Anderson, col. 5, lines 59-60.)

Similarly, Schmidt discloses a composite article comprising a rigid component and a flexible component. (*See* Schmidt, col. 1, lines 9-13.) The composite article in Schmidt is prepared using at least a two-step process of vulcanizing the rigid component (*see* Schmidt, col. 2, lines 9-14) and then vulcanizing the flexible component (*see* Schmidt, col. 6, lines 53-55.)

In comparison, independent claims 1 or 15 are directed toward improving classic seals made of one part without a rigid insert, and one of ordinary skill would not have considered either Anderson or Schmidt when looking to improve a classic seal. Accordingly, claims 1 and 15 are not obvious in view of Anderson, Schmidt, or a combination thereof.

Claims 2-5, 8-11 and 16 are allowable at least by virtue of their respective dependencies from independent claims 1 or 15.

Claims 6 and 13 rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Anderson in view of Schmidt and U. S. Patent No. 5,085,005 to Yasukawa et al.

Claims 6 and 13 are allowable at least by virtue of their dependency from independent claim 1.

Claims 7 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Anderson in view of Schmidt and Yasukawa as applied to claims 6 and 13 above, and further in view of U. S. Patent No. 6,306,514 to Weikel et al.

Claims 7 and 14 are allowable at least by virtue of their dependency from independent claim 1.

Claim 12 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Anderson in view of Schmidt as applied to claim 9 above, and further in view of EP 0 969 069 to Thomas et al. (Thomas).

Claim 12 is allowable at least by virtue of its dependency from independent claim 1.

*New Claims*

For additional claim coverage merited by the scope of the invention, Applicants are adding new claims 17 and 18. Claims 17 and 18 are allowable at least by virtue of its dependency from independent claim 1. Support for these claims can be found, for example, in Figure 1.

*Conclusion*

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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